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050536Z Apr 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000317

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/E;
LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCT](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION UPDATE: HIGH-RANKED OPPOSITION MEMBER
RESIGNS OVER PARTY LEADER'S REFUSAL TO DIALOGUE WITH
GOVERNMENT

REF: DJIBOUTI 298

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: With four days until polls open for the 2005 presidential election, the election climate is beginning to get interesting. Guelleh's campaign, as single candidate, proceeds with few disturbances or protests from the opposition or the population. The atmosphere in Djibouti is still one of slight apprehension due to opposition calls for protests on election day. In response to these calls for action from the opposition journals, the Minister of Interior has released a statement in the national press warning the opposition against disturbing the electoral process and asking the people to respect democracy. Amidst all this, La Nation's March 30th edition included an announcement that Farah Ali Waberi, Secretary General of the opposition party Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), has resigned due to a disagreement with his party's leader, Ismail Guedi Hared - who is also the current opposition coalition leader, regarding Hared's decision not to dialogue with the government. End Summary.

12. (C) La Nation's March 30th edition, a BBC report of March 31 and Embassy sources report that Farah Ali Waberi resigned his post as Secretary General of the opposition party Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) due to disagreement with his party's leader, Ismail Guedi Hared - also the opposition coalition leader. According to La Nation, Waberi stated in an interview with Radio Television Djibouti that Hared had written to President Guelleh requesting that Guelleh meet with the leaders of the three opposition parties that make up the Union for Democratic Alternance (UAD). Waberi then stated that two days after the request, President Guelleh agreed but Hared did not respond, which Waberi said was "inexplicable." Waberi continued that Hared was wrong in refusing the meeting that he had personally requested. La Nation's writers called the move by Waberi "a hard blow that widens a cut the opposition has already started with a profound internal crisis." BBC report of the event stated that Waberi "believes the absence of the opposition at the upcoming elections is a pity." No opposition journals have yet responded to the La Nation.

13. (C) In the same edition of La Nation, the Minister of Interior released a public statement explaining electoral regulations concerning campaign gatherings, authorized stances for boycotts and warning against demonstrating on election day. (Note: The Minister's statement in La Nation covered virtually the same points as in Ambassador's conversation in refTel. End Note.) The Minister's statement outlined the following as the only authorized positions for a boycott: 1) To participate or not in the elections, 2) In the case where abstention has been recommended, this party can invite its members and sympathizers to not vote, 3) The party can invite its members and sympathizers to give their vote for X candidate, or 4) The party can advise its members and sympathizers to do as they wish without orders from the party. The Minister then stated "All other demarches, in particular invitations to demonstrate that could disturb the campaign, the voting or in a general manner the public order are measures liable to a condemnation by the courts in accordance with the laws in practice." The statement continued that if there are protests, the organizers and silent partners of the protest will be taken to court. The Minister then appealed to the people's sense of intelligence and understanding, aiming the appeal at the opposition leaders, to respect democracy and keep the campaign and election day calm as it has been in the past. The statement ended with "I invite you to maintain your boycott, as is your choice. I respect this decision in accordance with democratic rules, but nonetheless I invite you to avoid all actions that might disturb the electoral campaign, the vote, or the public order."

14. (C) To date, there have been very few protests regarding the election or the Guelleh campaign. On March 26th, a protest followed Guelleh's campaign rally at the village of Doraleh in which the residents expressed their discontent

with the lack of jobs at Doraleh port. According to unconfirmed statements from Embassy sources Guelleh and Abdourahman Boreh, one of the businessmen involved in the Doraleh venture, visited the following day and told the population that they would get what they want. On March 27th a protest reportedly took place involving Pole University students who claim their fellow students studying on government scholarships overseas had not received their stipends in several months. (Note: Although this protest was not directly related to the election, many in Djibouti believe that, during the campaign, protest demands are more likely to be met. End Note.)

15. (C) Also on March 27th a protest took place by high school students wanting the date of the "practice" Baccalaureate exam moved to an earlier date. According to the opposition journal Le Renouveau, the Minister of Education announced on the radio that night that the practice exam would be moved. There were reports that during this protest an opposition party member, Houssein Robleh Dabar, was arrested. According to the opposition journals Realite and Le Renouveau, the arrest was prompted by his being affiliated with the opposition and near the protest. The journals both state that Dabar was held for 48 hours at the Central Commissariat of the Police before being taken before the procurer and subsequently being sent to Gabode Prison. There have been no reports of the length of his sentence. In a call to the Criminal Brigade to inquire into the charges and the veracity of the journals claims, Embassy learned that Dabar was charged with "Degradation of the well-being of others and violence." He was arrested, ostensibly, for throwing stones at cars and houses, including the residence of Aden Robleh Awaleh, President of the Djiboutian National Party (PND), a majority coalition party. Embassy has not yet found independent confirmation of the allegation.

RAGSDALE